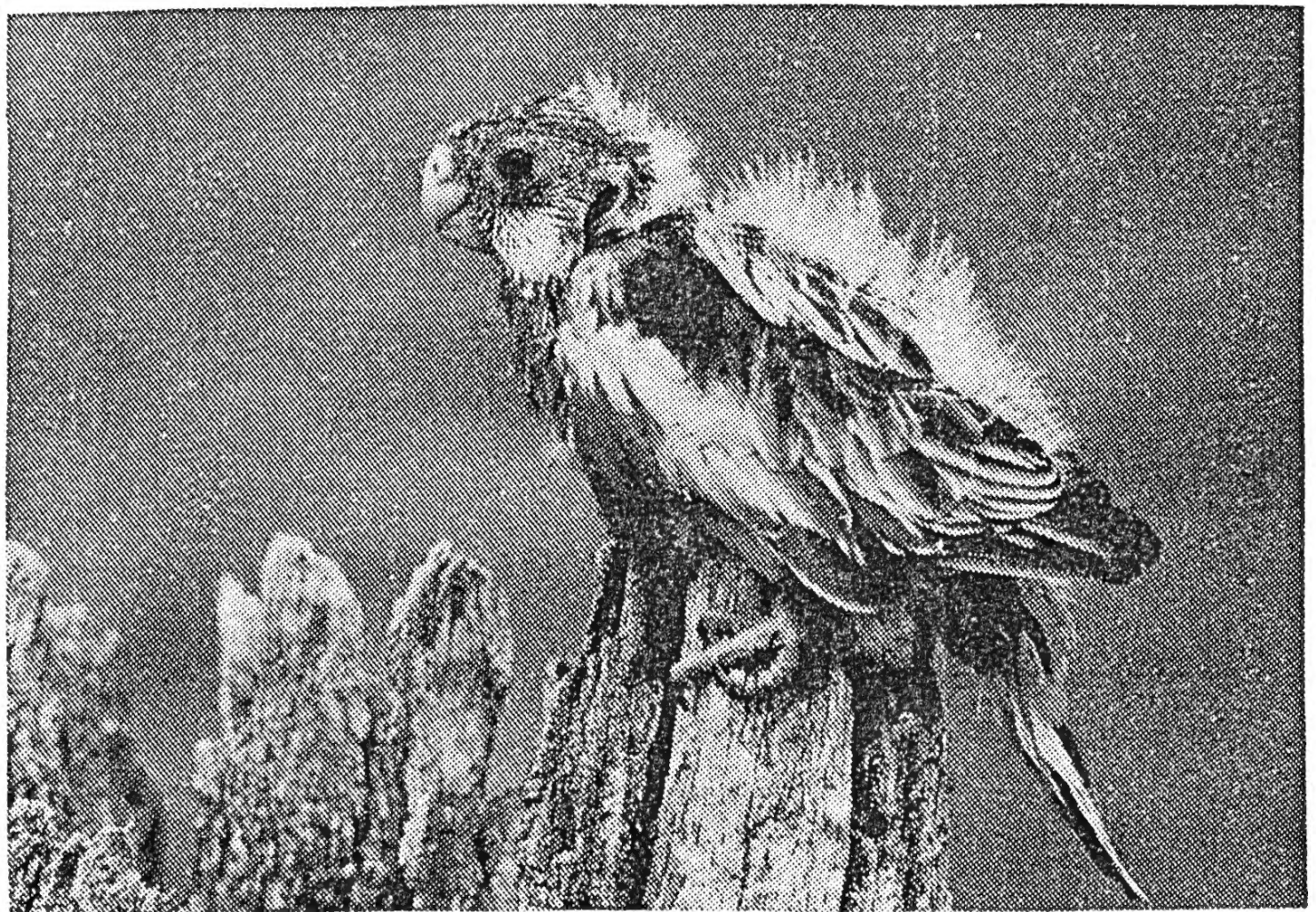


Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

DECEMBER 1985

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting December 6 Study Night - Fauna Subjects
Meeting February 7 Study Night - Flora Subjects
Excursion December 8 Bamgani Bush - Mr Lyndsay Fink
Excursion February 9 To be finalised at February Meeting



President: Miss H Burgess 312210
Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670
Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631
Editors: Mr G Binns 323670
Mr L Fink 052 861319

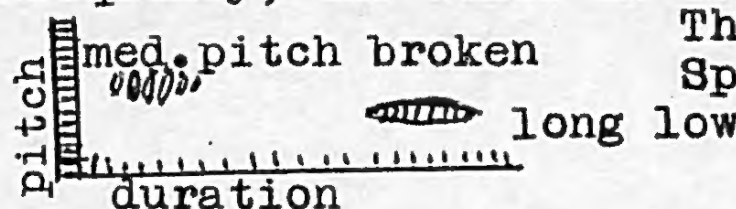
Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT. AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS. OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

FROGS. Dr Angus Martin. (NOVEMBER MEETINGS)
Kimberley Frogs

Dr Angus Martin has recently studied frogs in the Kimberley Area of N.W. Australia.

The noises frogs make often give information on the animal and this may be used to accurately identify the frog.

A method is needed to identify the noise and the most objective way is through an Electronic Machine that gives a visual signal that shows patterns of the sound. One is the pitch or frequency, the other is how long or the duration.

 This machine is a sound Spectrograph.

In some genus of frogs all appear to be the same, but their calls identify the different species.

Some like the brown tree frogs (most have lost their ability to climb) have a changeable call-high and low, and fast and slow. Still others have rapid modulating pitch.

Some frogs are large predatory animals that feed on other animals. In the far North West of Australia the first frog found by the expedition was an unknown and unlisted species of burrowing frog.

Attempts were made to relate the frogs of each area. The areas were the Kunnunurra-Kimberl. area, the Mitchell Plateau which is Bauxite, and the

Broome Derby area which has a short wet season and a prolonged hotter climate. The Mitchell is a cooler and wetter area. In the monsoon season frogs are plentiful, the rain is accompanied by violent electrical storms and the frogs immediately appear.

On the Mitchell Plateau with palm and eucalypts the party experienced 13 inches (340 mm) of rain from Cyclone Enid.

The Eastern Kimberley has many rivers and amazing rock formations with many Aboriginal paintings.

There are also huge termite heaps and although frogs were scarce there were plenty of other things to study.

These included Johnston Crocodiles, Legless Lizards, and even a python that had been run over by a truck. There was even Pelican's wishbone to pull! "If you survive the savage dogs you will be prosecuted". read the sign on a Gate, which seems to suggest that Biological surveys are a lot of fun!

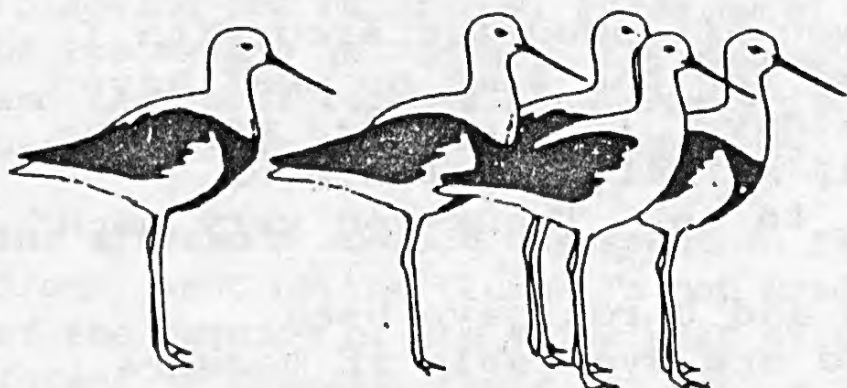
However, it was found that there is one group of frogs exclusive to each area studied, some others to two, and there was a group of eight species common to each area.

Some of these frogs were quite large, up to five inches long. Many have a protective exudation that is acid and stings, many are very attractive, one is the smallest - a tree frog which is found on the Mitchell Plateau.

Oh! one other thing about being a frog Biologist is lack of sleep!

Dr Martin was thanked for a very informative and humorous evening.

L.F.



November Excursion.

TRAWALLA AND
LAKE GOLDSMITH

Banded Stilts.
(from Australasian Wader Study Group Logo.)

Fifteen club members met Ivan Tiley at Trawalla and he gave us a great day.

The botanists had a field day - pun unintentional! A total of around fifty trees and other plants were observed. Those of special interest were:-

Bossiaea prostrata (Creeping Bossiaea), Viola cetoncifolia (Purple Viola), Pultenea pedunculata (Matted Bushpea) one plant of which had only yellow flowers and Pultenea gunnii (Golden Bush-Pea). Six species of orchid were noted.

Cont'd.

On the 'hill' were seen *Comospema erecinum* (Pyramid flower or Heath Milkwort), *Grevillea alpina* (Mountain Grevillea), *Calochilus robertsonii* (Purplish Beard Orchid) and *Glossodia major* (Wax-lip Orchid).

Thirty six birds came to visit us during the day (see list). Ivan however had promised us that he was keeping the best till last. We were taken to Lake Goldsmith where we saw a rare sight. There must have been upwards of a thousand Banded Stilts on the lake gathered together in four or five areas. As we watched small flocks came to join those nearest to us. Unfortunately, because of the time, we were unable to wait until all gathered together.

A *Cisticola* was flittering around our observation area and Greg showed how fit he was by climbing (dropping?) down a fairly steep slope to check out. No nest was found, but to see the bird was greatly appreciated.

Mentioning fitness, a special note must be made. Harvey must enter in the next veteran Olympics. As a high jumper he must be hard to beat. He practises over barbed wire fences! (Ouch!)

On behalf of those who attended the excursion I would like to thank Ivan for the time he must have spent preparing for the day. If there was anything of interest in the area, animal, vegetable or mineral, Ivan showed it to us. Thank-you very much Ivan.

Full lists of plants and birds have been prepared by Florence and are available if members wish to refer to them.

Tony Barlow

CHRISTMAS EXCURSION Bamgani Bush, Sun. Dec. 8th.

For those members coming in the morning, meet me at the Mt Mercer turn off. (ie in Meredith)

For those who may come later, directions are:- Turn right at the 60 K.P.H signs at Meredith (McLeod st) then the next turn right, cross the railway line, then straight out to Deans Rd turnoff. Turn left and follow the signs. There is a brick house on the left before the turnoff. Lyndsay Fink.

CLUNES EXCURSION REPORT - SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER

The full day excursion to the Clunes area provided members with some excellent observations, under ideal conditions. The day was fine and sunny, ideal for field work. The morning was spent in the wetland habitat of Merin Merin Swamp, in the Red Gum stand of the northern section.

As the water level is quite low this spring, nesting of a number of the usual swamp dwellers has not taken place in the usual profusion. Never the less there were many exciting sightings to interest the band of paddling members. A flock of thirty Red Kneed Dotterels was a highlight, and Sharp Tailed Sandpipers, Japanese Snipe, Rufous Songlark, together with an extensive list of more usual inhabitants, kept the party absorbed. The stumps were given due attention and provided observations of nests and/or young of Eastern Rosella, Red backed Parrot, Black Duck and Silver Gull (shells remaining). A copperhead snake was also discovered.

Following the bushfires, which burnt the entire surroundings of the swamps in January, the verges are now strongly grassed and the local farmers have some very substantial wheat and oats crops in neighbouring paddocks.

The afternoon session was spent in the Clunes State Forest block, west of the Clunes-Talbot Road. Possibly because of the burning of the major part of the Fells Gully forest in January, there has been a concentration of birds in the block visited this spring. Consequently it has been monitored frequently by bird observers over the past months. Roger Thomas has reported on this activity in the Courier (Saturday Nov. 16), and the remarkable number of honeyeater visitors this season. With eucalyptus and mistletoe flowering and fruiting, particularly the Red Box, conditions have been ideal.

This forest block is also part of a 'corridor' obviously favoured by dry-country bird species which visit our region from time to time.

Amongst the many sightings were some of particular interest to members, being visiting species not often seen in this district viz. Red Capped Robin, Painted Honeyeater, Black Honey eater. The latter were nesting, with one chick and one egg in the tiny exposed nest in an acacia.

POST SCRIPT

A further visit to the forest a week later revealed that the fledglings were no longer in the nest, the lining of which was disturbed, and the Black Honeyeaters were not in the vicinity. It is most likely that a bird predator had snapped up the chicks. The bird population was still quite remarkable - eight species of honeyeater, four species of cuckoo, two of tree creeper, (to mention a few) were sighted within a short period of time. And the Crested Bellbird called in the background.

GWB.

Botanical
Notes - contd.

FAMILY BRASSICACEAE - ctd. -

J. Willis lists 39 genera, but only about 12 are found near Ballarat.

Some common genera have the following characteristics :-

Pod dehiscent, at least 3 x as long as broad (siliqua)
Petals small, white or purplish Cardamine
(Bitter-cress)

Pods usually 3 nerved, without a beak, seeds in
one row Sisymbrium (Hedge-mustard)

Pods cylindrical or slender-cylindrical, with a
beak, seeds in one row, petals yellow
Brassica (Rape, Cabbage)

Pods rarely 3 x as long as broad (silicula), pod
compressed laterally (wedge-shaped) petals
white Capsella (Shepherd's Purse.

Pod indehiscent, longer than broad, constricted at
several points Raphanus (Wild Radish)

COLAC CAMP-OUT OF W.V.F.N.C.A.

The 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association was held at Colac on 25th-27th Oct.

The Colac Club entertained about 80 members on Friday night to a slide showing of the Seasons in the Otways. The slides were from various members and superbly presented by Joe.

On Saturday we were escorted to various habitats including the Aboriginal Grinding Stone, tall forest trees, Triplet Falls, fern gullies and heathland. On the track to Triplet Falls many species of fern were observed, those requiring a shaded environment. The comb fern was the exception as this fern was found in the heathlands. A new orchid to me was the *Chiloglottis cornuta*, the Green Bird Orchid. Paul Barnett knew exactly where to take us to see a specific plant, so we covered a lot of ground and saw many plants. In the Triplet Falls area we saw two huge mounds of sawdust, remnants of the logging that was done in past years. We tried to estimate how many trees would have been cut down to produce those, now sterile, mounds. Birds were difficult to see with the chattering enthusiasm of the crowd, but, no doubt, they could see us.

The evening was given over entirely to the 25th Anniversary with reminiscences from past Presidents and Secretaries. The banner which had been so ably assembled by Laurel Pope formed a colourful display. The Colac Club had a presentation of some of the indigenous plants for us to see. They also presented a sumptuous supper for the special occasion. Of course there was a birthday cake, decorated with green-fringed-tinsel-leaved, pipe-cleaner-flowered-grass-trees.

Cliff Beauglehole's latest book, "Gippsland Lakes Hinterland" was launched during the evening. Cliff now has three more books to publish to complete the thirteen study areas created by the Land Conservation Council of Victoria.

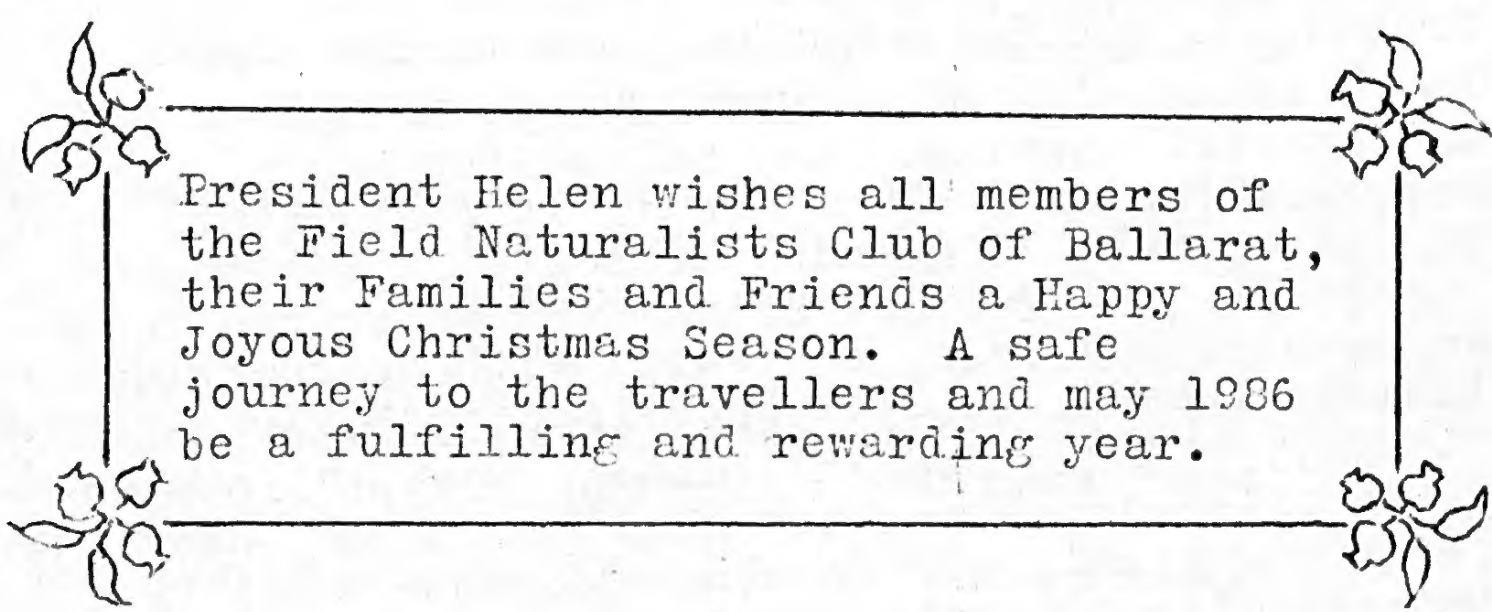
Cont'd.

As it was the start of daylight-saving it was hard to get up on Sunday morning to attend the tree-planting ceremony. An *Eucalyptus leucoxylon rosea* was planted in the Sculpture Park by the first President Ian McCann, assisted by the present President Bob Humphries. The banner and press photographer as well as members completed the scene.

While most members explored the bushland in the morning the delegates had a three hour meeting. We all met at Red Rocks and enjoyed lunch before bidding farewell. Most of us had time to go to the lookouts where magnificent views are had of the surrounding country, even as far as the Grampians. One Colac lady was heard to remark that it was the first time that she had been there and not felt as though she would be blown off!

It was a great week-end and thanks to Colac Club.

H.B.

A decorative border consisting of a rectangular frame with floral motifs at each corner. The top-left and bottom-left corners feature a cluster of three flowers with leaves. The top-right and bottom-right corners feature a single flower with leaves. The text is centered within the frame.

President Helen wishes all members of the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat, their Families and Friends a Happy and Joyous Christmas Season. A safe journey to the travellers and may 1986 be a fulfilling and rewarding year.